

Springboard Speaking Exercises and Pointers in Teaching English to Adult Students*

Joseph Z. ROMERO**

Warming Up

Using Compositions for Speaking

Writing their personal activities enriches their grammar and vocabulary skills. Reading the compositions of other students improve their reading comprehension and vocabulary. The exercise develops their confidence in asking questions, clarifications and in explaining. Reading orally develops their pronunciation and intonation. Students listening skills are likewise improved.

1. Have students write a brief composition of their activities.
2. Check their compositions.
3. Have them rewrite their compositions.
4. Have all the students read the compositions of other students.

Below are alternative approaches you can use in the presentation of their compositions:

Beginners level

Pattern 1

After everyone has read the compositions, ask the students to read their compositions. Ask three or four questions about the composition to the student who wrote it or to the other students.

Pattern 2

After everyone has read the compositions, ask students to read someone else's composition. Ask three or four questions about the composition to the student who read the composition or to the other students.

Intermediate level

Pattern 1

a) After the students have read their corrected compositions, have them narrate their compositions without looking at their work. This will be the first time for the other students to listen to the compositions. Ask questions to the writer or to the other students about the compositions. When everyone has done their narration, have students read the compositions of the others. This ensures they understood the narrations.

b) Give each student a composition to read. Pair the students. Have each student narrate about the composition they read. After the pair work has been done, ask questions or you can prepare the questions and hand each student a question to ask.

Using Oral Grammar Drills

Basic steps in using oral grammar drills:

1. The teacher reads the sentences. The students listen.
2. The teacher reads and students repeat after each sentence.
3. Students read the sentences. The students should be reminded that they should not read the whole sentence while looking at their copies. Give students time to sight read (for example, 7 seconds) then signal them to orally read. They must not look at their copies half way through the sentences.

* Received January 26, 2015

** 長崎ウエスレヤン大学 現代社会学部 外国語学科, Faculty of Contemporary Social Studies, Nagasaki Wesleyan University, 1212-1 Nishieida, Isahaya, Nagasaki 854-0082, Japan

4. The teacher reads and students repeat without their copies.
5. The teacher calls a student to repeat a sentence without a copy.

Sample lesson using adverbs

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| a. I have bread and coffee for breakfast. | (often) |
| b. I drive to work. | (sometimes) |
| c. I shop online. | (seldom) |
| d. I drink tea after dinner. | (usually) |
| e. I sleep late. | (rarely) |

page 1

6. The teacher instructs the students to fold their copies into two so that they do not see the sentences.
7. The teacher calls one student, reads the sentence. The student says the sentence using the adverb in its proper order.
ex. Teacher: I have bread and coffee for breakfast. (often)
Student: I often have bread and coffee for breakfast.
8. Students do pair work. (Students switch roles after completing the set.)
9. Proceed to page 2.

1. What do you often have for breakfast?
2. How do you go to work?
3. Do you shop online?
4. What do you drink after dinner?
5. Do you sometimes sleep late?

page 2

10. The teacher reads the questions. The students listen.
11. The teacher reads the questions and the students repeat.
12. The students read the questions. Follow number 3 instruction.
13. The teacher reads and students repeat without their copies.
14. The teacher calls a student to repeat a sentence without a copy.
15. The students read the questions and the teacher answers with adverbs.
16. The teacher asks the questions and the students answer with adverbs.
17. Students do pair work – question and answer.

Other oral drills samples are reading sentences in different structures:

Present tense

1. She listens to music.
2. They take the subway.
3. I clean the living room.
4. They feel hungry.
5. She plays the piano.

1. Ask the students to read in the
 - a. negative form
 - b. question form
 - c. past tense etc.
2. The teacher reads the sentences and students give the form without looking at their copies.

Question and Answer

In this exercise, students who answer must listen carefully to the question. Students who ask questions, must clearly pronounce words to be understood. Have the students fold their copies. The student who answers must not read the questions. The student must listen carefully to the question and answer in the long form.

Pattern Examples:

Using would rather.

Would you like to have coffee? orange juice

No, I would rather have orange juice.

Using has/have been ... ing

How long have you been waiting? for two hours

I have been waiting for two hours.

Using Should I and I don't think ...

Student A: Should I make a reservation?

Student B: I don't think you should to make a reservation.

Giving a Reason, Disagreeing, Inviting, Accepting and Refusing Invitations etc.

In this exercise, students practice giving reasons or disagreeing. Have the students fold their copies. The student must listen carefully to the springboard sentence and answer. Students learn how to politely ask and reply without offending.

Giving Reasons

Using I wanted to ... but ...

Student A: I wanted to buy. I couldn't afford it.

Student B: I wanted to buy but I couldn't afford it.

Disagreeing

Using I don't think ...

Student A: I think it was interesting.

Student B: I don't think it was interesting.

Conversation Patterns

Conversation samples found in textbooks are very good materials to develop comfortable usage of expressions. Choose the functional expressions and have the students use them. Ask questions about the conversation to ensure they understand what the conversation is all about.

1. Select words in the conversation which may need defining.

Explain the meaning and practice pronunciation.

2. Read the conversation to the students.

3. Reading roles. The teacher reads one role. Students read the other role.

Should the conversation have three or four roles, assign them to individual students to read.

4. Choose students to read the conversation.

5. Pair work or group work.

6. Listen to the conversation with textbooks.

7. Listen again without textbooks.

8. Ask questions about the conversation.

9. Work on useful expressions.

ex. When did you learn how to ice skate?

When did you learn how to

It was exciting.

It was

This drill not only makes them familiar with the expression but also helps them remember vocabulary.

Listening Sections

Listening sections are very useful material resources. After the listening exercise has been done, the steps presented in the conversation patterns can be used. Working on the question and answer, conversations, announcements, and the like improves the speaking and listening skills of students. They also make students more familiar and articulate in using the expressions or vocabulary taken up. Teachers or students can also design short conversations and have them perform in class. The teacher asks the other students about the performance.

Pattern Example For Beginner's Level

A: Hi! What would you like to order?

B: I'd like to have a club house sandwich.

A: Would you like a soup or salad with that?

B: Soup, please.

A: We have a choice of minestrone, tomato and onion soup.

B: I'll have onion soup.

A: OK. And what will you have to drink?

B: Mineral water, please.

A: Anything else?

B: No, that will be all.

A: For here or to go?

B: To go, please

Teacher asks:

1. Where do you think the conversation took place?
2. What were the other two choices for the order made?
3. What did the customer choose?
4. What were the three kinds of soup?
5. What soup did the customer choose?
6. What drink did the customer choose?
7. Was the order for here or to go?

The teacher presents other expressions like: dine in or dine out

8. For Q and A: Do you like to go to fast food?

Where do you usually go?

Why don't you like fast food? (For those who answer no.)

How often do you have fast food?

What's your favorite soup, drink etc.

Narrating

An example of a narration activity is to pair students. For example, students talk about what they like to do on their free time. Pairs change and they narrate what the other student talked about. Remind students to be careful with their tenses. Again change partners. By this time they have two narrations to do. Encourage students to ask questions or clarifications about the narrations.

Other examples of simple talks they can do are:

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| a. hobbies | e. health |
| b. sports | f. food |
| c. plans | g. shopping |
| d. travel | h. education |

Example:

Student A: I like to listen to K pop. I also enjoy watching Korean soap operas and movies. I also like to bake cakes, bread and cookies. On weekends I play golf.

1. Student B listens. Student B can ask Student A to repeat or to clarify to make sure the story is well understood and remembered.
2. Student B's turn to talk. Student A listens.
Student B: I enjoy listening to jazz. I like to watch baseball and soccer. I also like to go swimming or running twice a week.
3. Change partners.
4. Student A talks about student B with student C. Student B talks about Student A with student D. Student C talks about student D. Student D talks about student C.
5. After the students talked about their previous pair, they talk about themselves.
6. Repeat the pattern till everyone has talked with the rest of the class.

For larger classes, when pairs are changed they talk about one student, two students, three students etc. The task becomes more challenging. At the end of the activity, the teacher asks individual students to talk about one or two students. The teacher is encouraged to ask questions or clarifications about the stories.

For example: Who is your favorite Korean actor?

When did you start baking?

Do you have a favorite jazz artist?

Do you go running in the morning or at night?

Using Reading Materials for Speaking Exercise

Short reading materials are very useful in developing the fluency. After a reading and the exercises which go along with the material, use them for speaking exercise.

1. Assign each row which person they will take in the narration. Have the students narrate the article or story using the person they were assigned. The person can be the first person using I, third person he, she or they etc.

Example:

Aya's sister Kaori and her friends went shopping last weekend. They bought clothes, shoes and accessories. One of her friends bought an expensive wristwatch. Her sister got herself a brown winter coat. After shopping, they went to an Italian restaurant. They had pizza and coffee. They had so much fun.

narration 1 using I

I and my friends went shopping last weekend. We bought clothes, shoes and accessories. One of my friends bought a wristwatch. I got myself a brown winter coat. After shopping, we went to an Italian restaurant. We had pizza and coffee. We had so much fun.

Aya narrating about her sister ...

My sister and her friends went shopping last weekend. They bought clothes, shoes and accessories. One of her friends bought an expensive wristwatch. My sister got herself a brown winter coat. After shopping, they went to an Italian restaurant. They had pizza and coffee. They had so much fun.

Kaori's friend narrating ...

Kaori, I and our friends went shopping last weekend. We bought clothes, shoes and accessories. One of our friends bought a wristwatch. Kaori got herself a brown winter coat. After shopping, we went to an Italian restaurant. We had pizza and coffee. We had so much fun.

Using Phrasal Verbs for Speaking Drills

After teaching the meaning and usage of phrasal verbs, they can be used for speaking exercises. Prepare a set of questions using the phrasal verbs which were taught. Ask each student a question with a phrasal verb. Each student must be asked a question with a different phrasal verb. For more advance classes, add a follow up question. Go over the questions and answers again at the end of the drill.

Example: Teacher: What do you want to **cut down on**?

Student: I want to cut down on sweets.

Teacher: What kind of sweets do you like?

Student: I love ice cream and chocolates.

1. What hobby are interested to **take up**?
2. Do you enjoy **shopping around**?
3. How do you **get around**?
4. Do you **bottle up** your feelings?

Controlled “Free” Conversation

1. Prepare two sets of question sheets. One sheet should have at least five questions.
2. Give each student a sheet.
3. Students alternately ask questions.
4. Listen to their replies and give them a follow up question or statement to keep the conversation flowing.
5. At the end of their conversation, the teacher summarizes the conversation.

Sheet A

1. How was your New Year Holiday?
2. Did you put up a Christmas tree?
3. Did you receive a Christmas present?
4. Did you visit a shrine?
5. Did you cook oseichi?
6. Did you give otoshidama?

Sheet B

1. How's your family?
2. Where did you spend your New Year Holiday?
3. Did you go shopping during the New Year Sale?
4. Did you go anywhere with your friends or family?
5. What's your New Year resolution?

Pointers in Teaching English Adults

The challenge of teaching Japanese adults are the mixed language levels of students and their various reasons for studying the language. Most students who would like to study English as a foreign language may have the following reasons:

1. They majored in English and would like to be in touch with the language or brush up.
2. They plan to travel or retire abroad.
3. They are involved in international volunteer activities in their area.

4. Their job requires them to be proficient in the language.
5. They plan to sit for an English Proficiency test such as STEP, TOEIC or IELTS.
6. They plan to teach their children English.
7. They simply want to learn English as a hobby.

Adult students are more comfortable or feel more secured when they study with a textbook. Do not rush to finish a unit or chapter. It is important to use the textbook as a base for designing added oral or conversation drills to strengthen their grasp of the language. Creative and motivating exercises not found in the textbook maintains interest.

In situations where a “discussion” is called, avoid questions which might pry into their personal lives. Some students may be open about a few things but refrain from digging further as some students tend to be judgmental of personalities. When you feel that a discussion is starting to heat up, gracefully cut the topic. This might create friction or dislike among the members of the class.

To protect the privacy of students, do not ask questions related to their family or career. If however a student openly talks about family matters, limit your questions or comments within the boundary of respect and privacy.

Remember that the goal is for the students to express themselves in English no matter what opinions they may have. Disagreeing or debating with the students may embarrass them and drive them away from class. It is however important to “safely” respond. Such as, “That’s an interesting idea”. It is unsafe to directly tell them they are wrong. You can ask if someone holds a different idea. Should there be two or more ideas, conflicting or similar, explain or clarify their points of view but do not take sides. Should a student ask your position, try your best to explain your side in a manner that you do not offend students who hold a different view.

When students fail or have difficulty in explaining themselves, help by saying “Do you mean...” Explain someone’s answers when they are broken or unclear. Write the corrected form on the board for the student to understand, read and copy. This will at the same time help other class members to understand what the other student was trying to say. It will also guide the others in their presentation order.

When checking someone's pronunciation, be “sensitive”, take note of the individual errors and explain the correction. Since you are under limited time, avoid wasting minutes correcting someone's pronunciation. It is advisable to make corrections – pronunciation, grammatical structures, expressions on the board for the whole class to understand. The corrected pronunciation can be done on a whole class recitation basis.

During the pair work conversation drills, remind students not to read to each other but to have a conversation. Encourage them to use eye contact, vary intonation, articulate, speak clearly and to dramatize the lines.

There are students who have the habit of translating or coaching other students. Remind them not to do so. The students who do this might think they are being helpful but other students might think otherwise. When caught in a situation which needs translation, ask someone to translate for everyone to hear.

When a student is not ready to answer, call on someone who seems to be ready to give an answer. Get back to the student whom you called earlier. This is to prevent student pressure, learning stress and save time. It is not advisable to take the easy way out by calling on the good ones or finishing the students sentences.

Remember that you only meet once a week. Thus give each student the chance to speak in class. This is the reason why oral drills or class activities are essential in the program of each lesson.

Some hold the wrong notion that there are expressions, words, phrasal verbs or idioms which

need not be taught because they hardly use them. However, it must be remembered that students are exposed to different media forms and meet many different nationalities who express themselves in a particular manner. They may in the process encounter these seemingly “unused” expressions, phrases or words.

Weekly reviews, warming up and wrapping up of lessons are very advisable. Games or songs must be carefully chosen since most adult students do not quite enjoy them. Some may find them fun but others may find them childish, boring, embarrassing or a waste of time. The questions are: “Did they have fun?” and better still “Did they learn?”

Keep in mind that the students want to learn how to speak so minimize lecture type, avoid self-narration or over clowning. Be very careful of culture and social comments. A negative remark may be taken against you as discrimination or harassment.

While the above suggested activities may seem mechanical or dull, a creative presentation and motivating method will do wonders in the teaching process. Well prepared, organized and creative lessons and presentation will ensure active and motivated students.

